

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The amendment to Claim 1 is supported by original Claim 11. The amendment to Claim 17 places this case in independent form, and thus in condition for allowance. New Claims 18, 19 and 20 are supported by original Claim 1. New Claim 20 is supported at page 10, lines 8-18. No new matter has been entered.

Applicants appreciate the indication that Claim 17 is allowable. As noted by the above amendment to this claim, it is now in independent form and thus in condition for allowance.

The remaining claims have been amended to require that the process be carried out in the liquid phase. This amendment distinguishes the claimed process from the prior art.

In particular, Tabak relates to “a vapor phase isomerization process of monocyclic methyl-substituted aromatic hydrocarbon feeds.” See e.g., column 1, lines 14-16 and column 2, lines 26-29 of the reference. Tabak emphasizes that the operating conditions employed in the reference process are important at column 9, lines 33ff and specifically points out that the process of the invention is carried out in the vapor phase. See, e.g., column 9, lines 39-45. Indeed, it is indicated that the reference process must be carried out at a temperature between 800° F and 1000° F and pressures ranging from about 20 psig up to about 500 psig (column 9, lines 51-54). Nowhere in the reference is it either disclosed or suggested that the reaction could occur in the liquid phase.

As pointed out at, e.g., specification page 8, lines 8-9, a preferred aspect of the present invention is that the process be carried out in the liquid phase. This limitation appeared in original Claim 11, and has now been incorporated into present Claim 1. This amendment distinguishes the pending claims from Tabak, and establishes the patentability thereof.

Yan fails to make up for that lacking in Tabak. In particular, Yan teaches a different reaction from Tabak in that the addition of hydrogen is a necessary part of the Yan reaction.

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In addition, and similar to Tabak, the so-called "upgrading" of the charge stream in Yan is carried out at temperatures of 700-1000° F in the vapor phase. See, e.g., column 3, lines 21-25 of the reference. Thus, Yan fails to make up for that lacking in Tabak, and is thus ineffective against the pending claims even in combination therewith.

Accordingly, and in view of the above amendments to the claims and present remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance, and early notification thereof is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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